

ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

SUBJECT: (Optional)

Soviet-Israeli Relations: Normalization in the Offing?

FROM:

Graham E. Fuller
NIO/NESA

EXTENSION

NO.

NIC 03705-85

DATE

23 July 1985

STAT

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The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

NIC 03705-85

23 July 1985

National Intelligence Council

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM: Graham E. Fuller
National Intelligence Officer for NES

SUBJECT: Soviet-Israeli Relations: Normalization in the Offing?

1. News of recent discussions between the USSR and Israel on possible normalization of relations should not come as a complete surprise. Distinct benefits could accrue to the USSR as a result of normalization.

- The absence of any relations with Israel so far has given the Soviets very little leverage in playing a role in the peace process. If relations were restored the Soviets would have to be perceived as more balanced than before in its regional relationships. In principle it would be in a greater position to influence Israeli policies. Some Israelis--primarily within Labor--are disconcerted by a relationship of hostility with the Soviet Union. They are concerned lest Israel gratuitously associate itself with the US in anti-Soviet policies where this might not be necessary, especially where it could affect Jewish emigration from the USSR.
- Obviously the Arab world would be unhappy with Soviet normalization, but the Soviets are in a position to justify it. The USSR is a superpower; it should enjoy relations with all countries in the world, and it will be in a position to play a greater role in the peace process--as a friend of the Arabs--than they were able to before. I believe such a move by the Soviets can be taken with minimum costs to their position in the Arab world.

2. Other issues are also on the Soviet-Israeli agenda.

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- Israel as a possible missile base against the USSR: Soviet propaganda has devoted an unusual amount of attention to the prospect that Israel could become a base for US missiles aimed at the Soviet Union. The USSR has warned Israel (and Turkey) about this. Greater freedom of exchange might, from the Soviet perspective, help deter this possibility.
- Jewish emigration: Soviet policies on Jewish emigration and overall relations with Israel have always been heavily influenced by the state of US-Soviet relations. Soviet relations with Israel may therefore play a growing role as a function of an evolving new Soviet strategy toward the US.

3. A further consideration might be that the USSR wishes to reduce the potential for major US confrontation over the Arab-Israeli question. If Moscow, in fact, wishes to reduce the risk of confrontations with high danger potential, this is a logical area to do it in. The Soviets may feel that Syria is on a collision course with Israel; whatever the damage to Israel, the damage to Syria will be vastly greater. The Soviets probably wish to maintain controlled tensions in the region, but not ones certain to lead to war. (Our own assessment is that an Israeli-Syrian war within the next three to five years is fairly good.)

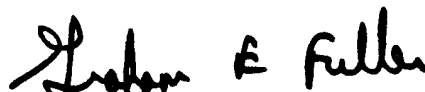
- The USSR could believe that tempting the Israelis toward some kind of settlement might help diminish the prospects of real war. The USSR may also wish to play some role in the peace process in which they would bring some Syrian chips to the table, play a major role in some kind of settlement, but also insure that enough Arab-Israeli friction remained to create problems for the US in the region and enable the Soviets to play on the "Arab nationalist" side. This interpretation suggests that the Soviets might not go all out to stop a US peace process if it could preempt part of it for themselves.
- A final and more menacing interpretation could be that the USSR is determined to move to support Syrian demands for the return

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of the Golan. The Soviets could be serving notice on Israel that they are determined to get it back for Syria--albeit using maybe a few carrots as well as sticks.

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Graham E. Fuller

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
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